

## **GILA COUNTY PORTION OF THE GILA/PINAL LOCAL WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AREA**

### **Geography**

Gila is one of Arizona's most rural counties, where the principal economic activities are mining in the southern portion of the county and tourism in the northern part. Because of the tourism, the trade and service industries play an important and growing role in the county's economy. With its cool mountain climate and close proximity (93 miles) to metropolitan Phoenix, the northern Gila County city of Payson attracts many visitors, especially in summer. Continuing growth in tourism has led to increased demand for lodging, restaurants, and other tourist-related items found in the trade and service industries. Like other northern and rural regions of the state, Gila County has a fast-growing housing market, especially for retirement and vacation homes.

### **Population**

According to the most recent official population figures, produced by the US Census Bureau, mid-year estimates for 2000 show 51,335 people reside in Gila County. This resident population accounts for 1 percent of state of Arizona's total population. In the ten years since the 1990 census, Gila County's population grew by nearly 28 percent, or roughly 2.5 percent annually compared to the state as a whole which grew over 40 percent for the decade. Payson is the largest and the most rapidly growing town in the county with an estimated population of 13,620 and growth of nearly 63 percent since 1990. Globe is the next largest, with an estimated population of 7,486.

### **Income**

From 1990 to 1999, local total personal income in Gila County increased 71.7 percent compared to the State's almost 90 percent. However, on a per capita basis, the gain of 41.3 percent was close to 5 percent below the State's growth of 46.3 percent. Gila County per capita income was \$19,002 in 1999, about 75.5 percent of the state average, down from 78.1 percent in 1990. Average earnings per job increased 2.3 percent in 1999 to \$23,828—approximately one half of the gain of the state at 4.1 percent.

### **Labor Force**

The Gila County labor force fell roughly 2.2 percent each year from 1995 to 2000. Gila County employment figures fell less, however, with an average annual decrease of 1.8 percent. This affected the unemployment rate downward from 8 percent in 1995 to 5.8 percent in 2000.

## **Employment**

Total non-farm employment in Gila County averaged 1.7 percent average yearly growth from 1995-2000. The largest growth occurred in mining, 24 percent for the period. Government also registered gains at 5.2 percent per year and was also the dominant industry in 2000, employing 4,725 workers. Trade was the second most dominant industry with 3,325 workers, followed by services with 2,575 workers. Three industries lost employment during the period. Finance, insurance & real estate (FIRE), manufacturing, and trade all combined for a loss of 650 total jobs for the 1995-2000 period.

## **Growing and Declining**

For the year 2000, the largest industry job growth was experienced in offices and clinics of medical doctors (+118 jobs), nursing and personal care facilities (+99 jobs), and residential building construction (+76 jobs). The largest employment losses appeared in eating and drinking places (-206 jobs), lumber and other building materials (-58 jobs), and new and used car dealers (-57 jobs). For further details see the enclosed tables.

## **Forecast**

Research Administration is forecasting employment to grow 1.1 percent in PY 01-02 and another 2.6 percent in PY 02-03. Countywide unemployment is expected to decrease slightly from the PY 00-01 rate of 5.8 percent to 5.6 percent in PY 01-02 and afterwards to 5.5 percent in PY 02-03. Unemployment in the non-reservation areas is expected to fall from the PY 00-01 rate of 4.8 percent to 4.6 percent in PY 01-02 and then to 4.5 percent in PY 02-03.

## **Issues of Concern**

- Low wage and salary gains

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, November 2001.